

**CITY OF SEATTLE
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK**

CITIZENS' CHARTER AMENDMENT PETITION GUIDE
An Information Resource for Citizens
October 2012

This document is provided to the members of the public for **informational and guidance purposes only**. Additional information or questions may be directed to the Seattle City Clerk at: **clerk@seattle.gov** or **600 4th Avenue, Floor 3, PO Box 94728, Seattle, WA 98124-4728** or **(206) 684-8344**.

Petition coordinators may also seek legal advice from a private attorney.

Step 1 **RESOURCES:**

The following procedural resources are available for your review online and upon request from the Office of the City Clerk:

- [Seattle City Charter, Article XX](#) *Charter Amendments*
- [SMC 2.08.030](#) *Specifications for petition*
- Citizens' Charter Amendment Petition Guide (*this document*)

Please also refer to the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) and the current Elections Calendar issued by the Washington Secretary of State's Office for additional information.

Step 2 **FILING OF PETITION:**

One paper copy and one electronic copy of the proposed charter amendment petition, including the full text of the proposed amendment and a letter of transmittal containing the name, address, and phone number of the contact person, should first be filed with the City Clerk.

Upon receiving such petition, the City Clerk will date the petition, assign a petition serial number, and transmit a copy bearing its serial number and date of filing to the City Attorney.

Step 3 **REVIEW OF PETITION FORM:**

The City Clerk will review the proposed petition form for conformance to the established standards listed below:

Petitions must be printed or typed on single sheets of white paper of good quality and each sheet of petition paper having a space thereon for signatures must contain the text of the petition and the following warning language:

"WARNING

Every person who signs this petition with any other than his or her true name, or who knowingly signs more than one of these petitions, or signs a petition seeking an election when he or she is not a legal voter, or signs a petition when he or she is otherwise not qualified to sign, or who makes herein any false statement, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor. (RCW 35.21.005).

In addition, it is unlawful for any person:

1. To sign or decline to sign any petition for a City initiative, referendum, or Charter amendment, in exchange for any consideration or gratuity or promise thereof; or
2. To give or offer any consideration or gratuity to anyone to induce him or her to sign or not to sign a petition for a City initiative, referendum, or Charter amendment; or
3. To interfere with or attempt to interfere with the right of any voter to sign or not to sign a petition for a City initiative, referendum, or Charter amendment by threat, intimidation or any other corrupt means or practice;

Any violation of paragraphs 1, 2, or 3 shall be punishable by a fine of not more than \$500 or by imprisonment for a period not to exceed six months, or by both such fine and imprisonment. (Seattle Ordinance 94289)."

"CHARTER AMENDMENT PETITION FOR SUBMISSION TO THE SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL

"To the City Council of The City of Seattle:

We, the undersigned registered voters of The City of Seattle, State of Washington, propose and ask for the amendment to the City of Seattle Charter known as Charter Amendment Measure No. entitled:

(here set forth the established ballot title of the measure),

a full, true and correct copy of which is included herein, and we petition the Council to present said proposed Charter Amendment to the qualified electors of The City of Seattle for approval or rejection at the next general municipal election occurring in accordance with Article XX, Section 2 of the City Charter; and each of us for himself or herself says: I have personally signed this petition; I am a registered voter of The City of Seattle, State of Washington, and my residence address is correctly stated."

The City Clerk will review for the following:

- ☐ Does the petition contain the name, address and phone number (optional) of petitioner or contact person?
- ☐ Is the petition typewritten and in a readable font?
- ☐ Is the petition printed on single sheets of paper of good writing quality?
- ☐ Are the petition pages at least 8 ½" wide and 11" long, and not larger than 11" wide and 17" long?
- ☐ Is there a top margin of at least 1" ?
- ☐ Are the signature lines numbered?
- ☐ Are the printed words legible?
- ☐ Is the complete text of the proposed amendment included on the petition form?
- ☐ Is the number of signature lines on a page limited to no more than 20?

APPROVAL OF PETITION FORM AND TEXT:

The City Clerk will notify the petition coordinator of the completed review of the proposed charter amendment petition within five business days after the date filed with the City Clerk. The coordinator will receive a letter and a phone call from the City Clerk providing notification of the approval or rejection of the petition as to form (if approved, the ballot title prepared by the City Attorney will also be included). If approved, a copy of the petition form will be provided to the Executive Director of the Ethics and Elections Commission.

If a change in the original document filed is requested by the petition coordinator, the change will be considered a new filing. (Refer to Step 2)

Step 4

PROCURING SIGNATURES:

Fifteen percent of the total votes cast for mayor at the last Mayoral election is the number of registered voter signatures needed to validate the charter amendment petition.

Example: 2009 Mayoral race - 206,286 votes cast, so until the next Mayoral election, 30,943 valid signatures of registered Seattle voters will be required to qualify an initiative.

Each signature must be executed in ink or indelible pencil and must be followed by the printed name and address of the signer and the date of signing. RCW 35.21.005(2). (If additional information is requested on the petition, it must be noted as "optional.")

Signatures must be gathered within the 6 month period prior to submitting the signatures to the City Clerk.

Step 5

SIGNATURE SUBMITTAL

When the required number of signatures are collected, the signed petitions must be filed with the City Clerk's Office. Contact with the City Clerk is recommended in advance in order to schedule an appointment for the filing of the petitions.

At the time the petitions are filed, an estimate of the number of signatures and number of petition pages will be requested. The pages should be numbered in sequence, beginning with 1 or 001, etc., in the upper right corner of each sheet.

The City Clerk will transmit the petitions to King County Records and Elections Division within three business days after they have been filed. King County Records and Elections Division will verify the validity of the signatures to determine sufficiency or insufficiency (Refer to Step 4 regarding the percentage formula for determining the number of valid signatures required). King County Records and Elections Division is required to make such a determination with "reasonable promptness." RCW 35.21.005(4).

All signatures followed by a date of signing which is more than six months prior to the date of filing of the petition with the City Clerk shall be stricken. RCW 35.21.005(8).

Step 6

COUNCIL ACTION PLACING MEASURE ON THE BALLOT

If a sufficient number of valid signatures have been verified, the Council will pass a bill or adopt a resolution authorizing King County Elections to place the charter amendment on the ballot for a forthcoming general municipal election occurring at least sixty days after the filing of the petition.

The general election will be held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday of November, of each year. A resolution or an ordinance calling for the measure to be placed on the ballot must be presented to the county auditor no later than the day of the primary election which is held on the first Tuesday of the preceding August.

Recommended Timeline for 2013

A resolution or ordinance authorizing a Charter Amendment for the 2013 general municipal election must be presented to King county Elections no later than August 6, 2013.

The petition coordinator should consider the verification process and legislative schedules that must be completed in order for the City Council to meet the August 6, 2013 deadline. It is recommended that the coordinator consult with the City Clerk and with King County Elections when determining the petition filing timeline.

Step 7

ELECTION RESULTS:

Following the election, written notice will be sent to the City Clerk from King County certifying the results of the vote count.

If the charter amendment was passed by a majority of the voters, it becomes part of the Charter upon proclamation of the Mayor (within five days after certification of the election). Notice will be published in the City's official newspaper, the Daily Journal of Commerce.